

Letter to Council

February 25, 2013

Congregation Council
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
2515 Waugh Drive
Houston, TX 77006
Attention: Charles Wilson, Councilmember

Dear Charles,

We finished our phone conversation at about 6:40 yesterday evening. You had responded to my 02/24/2013 letter to council that I sent to you as an email attachment. I asked you several times if I should remove you from my list. Each time you said that was not what you wanted; please let me know if I misunderstood you on this.

You threatened to speak to your attorney "tomorrow" if I failed to take some further action regarding statements in my material that you found objectionable. You said my material was libelous and slanderous. I asked you numerous times to give me examples of some objectionable statements. You gave me a few examples, however each time you made it apparent to me that you did not understand the material.

If my memory serves me correctly, one paragraph that you discussed as being objectionable is the following.

"It appears to me that Steve and Lura are using their leadership positions to abuse the process. Though I only met with Lura on 02/24/2013, I have no doubt that Steve is complicity. I urge Council to appoint an unbiased committee, perhaps using members of another church, to investigate this matter."

I tried to explain to you that when I (or anyone I suppose) say "It appears to me that ..." I am expressing an opinion. Also when I say "I have no doubt that ..." I am also expressing an opinion. I do feel very strongly about these opinions, and in fact I believe them to be true. However, I do not have the resources to thoroughly investigate this matter, nor do I have the ability to compel people to appear and testify. This is the reason that I followed up with the next sentence, "I urge Council to appoint an unbiased committee, perhaps using members of another church, to investigate this matter."

I do not believe, as you allege, that I am "promoting libel and slander." I really do want to be reasonable. Following are three links that I hope you will visit.

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/libel>

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/slander>

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/defamation>

If, after reviewing the above, you feel that I have made untruthful statements, and especially any that are libelous, slanderous, or defamatory, please point them out to me.

You also threatened to “get an attorney” if I failed to take down certain letters and my landscaping Website from the Internet. You failed to give any specific reason for any of this being objectionable, other than the fact that you just do not like it. I realize you object to “all if it” but that is not a specific reason.

You did not attempt to explain how anything of my material would or could violate the church bylaws. As a Council officer you have been aware that I still have no copy of the bylaws, and you know I would like a digital copy, and it within you power to email me a copy, yet you for some unexplained reason choose not to send such to me. I believe this fits the bill for censorship.

You made reference to the Bible a few times. Even though I continued to ask what verse you were referring to, you were unable be more specific. You did mention Paul and the Corinthians. Eventually you referenced Matthew 18 and suggested that I read the entire chapter. I did. Part of it caught my attention:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+18&version=NIV>

Dealing With Sin in the Church

¹⁵ “If your brother or sister^[b] **sins**,^[c] go and **point out their fault**, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’^[d] ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, **tell it to the church**; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a **pagan or a tax collector**.

¹⁸ “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be^[e] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^[f] loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

I consider censoring non-exempt material in any form (physical or digital), hiding it, making it unavailable, or impeding access any way to any church member to be an outright **sin**. The exception might be that the person doing the censoring is too ignorant to know any better. I realize this speaks poorly of our church leadership, but *if the shoe fits wear it*. I have pointed this **fault** out to church leaders, and after continued obstinance, I am **telling it to the entire church**. I consider myself a compassionate person, and I do not intend to treat any church member like a pagan or tax collector.

You said repeatedly that you wanted to find “a middle road.” Although I asked you repeatedly to explain what middle road you might perceive, you appeared unable to verbalize what that might be. Honestly I see no middle road to censoring non-exempt material in any form (physical or digital).

At first you said there was “no digital information to withhold.” Later you changed your position and stated that there was digital material. I will accept the later statement, since almost all church writings are created on computers nowadays.

You told me that "Council has responded" to the matter of censorship of non-exempt digital information. As far as I know, Council has not responded. Council speaks through its minutes that it approves at each monthly business meeting. If such minutes address the matter, I hope you will email me a copy. You appear to have a misconception that the Mutual Ministry Committee speaks on behalf of Council. With all due respect, for Council to generate minutes it must be properly called to order; Council cannot outsource this to a committee no matter how convenient it might be.

Please make this letter part of your next open business meeting.

Sincerely,

Charlie Dean

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